

## **Delay of Gratification Abstract**

### **Title: The Relation between Children's Focus of Attention and their Delay of Gratification Performance**

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#### **Introduction**

Delay of gratification is the ability to refrain from immediate temptations in order to receive a greater reward later. For example, a child who takes time to study while in school, instead of playing, may have better job prospects. How children perform on delay of gratification tasks has been linked to their later social and academic performance (e.g., Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990).

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to determine what might improve children's delay performance. Past studies indicate that children who are not asked to delay in the presence of the reward will wait longer and are able to receive a greater reward than those who delay in the presence of the reward (Mischel & Ebbesen, 1970). We test children on a different type of delay task (an accumulation task, where rewards build up incrementally), and investigate whether children's attention to the rewards is also related to how long they delay.

#### **Method**

Children ( $N = 30$  Mean age = 35.99,  $SD = 6.10$ ) were given the chance to earn up to 30 stickers. The experimenter put a sticker into the child's bowl every ten seconds. Once the children stated that they no longer wanted to wait for more stickers or they touched the immediate reward (the bowl or the stickers), the game ended.

#### **Results**

We are currently conducting a frame-by-frame analysis of the videos. We hypothesize that children who spent more time looking at the immediate reward would be more likely to delay gratification because it would be motivating to see the reward accumulate.

#### **Conclusion**

Understanding what behaviors promote delaying gratification may help parents and teachers devise strategies to help children practice this skill. Such training could promote children's future performance in real world social and academic scenarios.

**Keywords:** Delay of gratification, attention, preschoolers, cognitive development, etc.